

Is Your School District's Sex & HIV/AIDS Education Following the Law?

As of January 1, 2004, California enacted new laws covering sex education in public schools. As a teacher, principal or school board member, here are some things you may want to know.

- **Sex ed is not required. HIV/AIDS education is required once in middle school and once in high school.**
- **If schools offer sex ed, they cannot provide an abstinence-only program.**
Abstinence-only education offers abstinence as the only choice for preventing pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. Many abstinence-only programs are religious in nature; sexuality education cannot promote any religious ideas.
- **Sex education must be medically accurate, age-appropriate, and, starting in 7th grade must cover abstinence, effectiveness and safety of birth control, protection from sexually transmitted diseases, and decision-making.**
This means that if schools are offering sex ed, they must cover these subjects. They must look to trusted sources of information, like the American Academy of Pediatrics, to determine medical accuracy. All pregnancy and STD prevention devices that have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration must be covered.
- **Parents must be notified that their child will have sex ed or HIV/AIDS education and be allowed to see the materials before the classes start.**
If parents don't want their children to take the class they must write a note requesting that.
- **Teachers of both HIV/AIDS education and sexuality education must be trained in the subject.**
Schools may use outside organizations or speakers, if they have training, but those organizations must also follow the laws when they present.
- **English language learners and students with disabilities must get sexuality and HIV/AIDS education that is right for them.**
Schools must make sure that all students can get sexuality and HIV/AIDS education in a way that works for them.
- **Sexuality education must respect and address the needs of students of all sexual orientations.**

These facts are just a brief overview of the new law. For a more in-depth discussion, see "Is Your School District in Compliance with SB 71?" If you have questions about SB 71 and your curriculum, contact your local Planned Parenthood or the ACLU.

